Attachment Theory and the Cry of Dereliction: Toward A Science-Engaged Model of Atonement for Posttraumatic Stains on the Soul

PRESTON HILL
Richmont Graduate University
phill@richmont.edu

DAN SARTOR
Clinical Director, Wings Center at Eagle Ranch
dsartor@eagleranch.org

Abstract: Recent discussions in analytic theology and philosophy have explored how traumatic events can interrupt a person's experience of union with God. Sparked by Eleonore Stump's book *Atonement*, this problem has been treated as a type of "stain on the soul" relating to morally lamentable leftovers in human psyches after horrendous sin has been committed. While Stump deploys a science-engaged model of atonement to address many kinds of stains on the soul, one kind remains unaccounted for, namely, stains on the soul caused by trauma in which the survivor is innocent of any moral wrongdoing. How might such "posttraumatic stains on the soul" (PTSS) be healed through atonement? In this paper we offer the beginnings of a science-engaged model of atonement to fill this recent lacuna. We zero in on one particular kind of PTSS, namely, the experience trauma survivors can have of blaming God for their suffering. Drawing insights in psychological science from attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology on the role of empathy for human flourishing, we sketch a model of atonement to explain how it might be that God, without being morally culpable, nevertheless makes reparation for persons who feel angry at God and/or alienated from God as a result of suffering trauma.

Keywords: Atonement, Trauma, Science-engaged theology, Eleonore Stump, Psychology

1. Introduction

Traumatic events and the posttraumatic stress they create seem especially important to address given the global crises of 2020 and 2021. We have seen an ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, mass exposures to racial injustice, and severe political unrest. It is therefore not surprising to find recent studies report that 70% of adults worldwide experience a traumatic event at some point in their lives (Benjet et al. 2016) and that in America in particular this statistic jumps to as high as 90% (Kirkpatrick et al. 2013). In light of these findings, it might be fair to agree with some trauma psychiatrists of the last decade who conclude that "trauma is now our most urgent public health issue" (van der Kolk 2014, 356).

Trauma may be very simply defined as "an inescapably stressful event that overwhelms one's coping mechanisms" (van der Kolk and McFarlane, and Weisaeth 2007, 279). These traumatic events constitute an urgent health issue, not simply because they are so common, but because they frequently generate maladaptive behaviors and styles of relating for those with posttraumatic stress, which profoundly disrupt human flourishing and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, these interruptions to human flourishing can persist for years even after the traumatic events themselves are over. These intractable consequences are the defining feature that distinguishes traumatic stress from other forms of suffering for which long-stage recovery is not required. These ongoing consequences constitute *post*traumatic stress since they persist even when danger is no longer imminent. Posttraumatic stress includes such symptoms as hypervigilance, avoidant behaviors, rage, shame, depression, anxiety, and an overall sense of terror and helplessness that inhibits relational connection with others.

Importantly, trauma can interrupt not only one's relationships with others but also one's relationship with God (Sartor et al. 2018, 258–259). To illustrate this, consider the case of Diane, an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse (trigger warning):

> My father abused me until I was four years old. He threatened to kill my mother or younger brother if I told . . . Yet my mother continued to keep us in that environment. They eventually divorced . . . After her divorce, my mother had affairs—the first one involved a priest; the other, a married man. The priest was sexually inappropriate with me . . . [he] molested me when I was eighteen . . . Growing up was also filled with constant health issues, nightmares about being chased and raped . . . I have felt alone and unprotected most of my life. I knew God was there, but his promises were not for me . . . Although I sought and served God with all of my strength, I still felt

> a wall and a distance between us . . . I was also terrified of him, but longed to be close to and secure in him. (Schmutzer 20011, 357–358)

This story shows that traumatic events can significantly interrupt the rich shared attention and loving union that is often desired by many in their relationship with God.

Recent discussions in analytic theology and philosophy have engaged this problem of how trauma can interrupt a person's union with God. These discussions have been sparked by Eleonore Stump's book *Atonement* in which she treats such problems as a kind of shame that inhibits one's experience of being desirable for union with God. For Stump, this shame can be overcome by the atoning work of Christ. Responding to Stump, Michael Rea has helpfully indicated that when external trauma is the cause of interrupted union with God rather than one's own wrongdoing, this involves the sin and guilt of others rather than one's own sin and guilt, and to that extent the usual solutions from atonement do not apply in the same way. Moreover, Rea shows that trauma leaves behind a "stain on the soul" much the same as guilt does even when solutions like Stump's are supplied. While Stump has offered a solution to stains on the soul for the guilty, how can posttraumatic stains on the soul be healed through atonement?

Given the current trends of cross-pollination between analytic theology and science-engaged theology, this question appears ripe for a science-engaged approach. This question might even be called a "theological puzzle" since it poses a theological question that requires empirical science for an answer. An empirical science is required to answer this question following Stump's work on atonement because the variant of the question Stump's work does address—stains on the soul regarding guilt—draws on a specific (once popular) mirror neuron hypothesis taken by Stump from certain studies in autism research to explain how the preconditions for union with God can be achieved through Christ's atoning work on the cross. Yet, while Stump's account deploys a science-engaged approach to address stains on the soul relating to guilt and shame, a similar account is still needed to address stains on the soul relating to shame. As we shall sketch further below, Michael Rea exposes this lacuna by referring to a particular kind of stain on the soul, namely, stains on the soul caused by trauma in which the survivor is innocent of any moral wrongdoing.

In this paper we wish to offer the beginnings of a science-engaged model of atonement to fill this recent lacuna in analytic theology on the topic of stains on the soul. We will not focus on all types of shameful stains on the soul, only on those shameful stains caused by trauma. We will call these posttraumatic stains on the

soul (PTSS) and will elaborate this construct later. Moreover, we will not try to address all types of posttraumatic stains on the soul either, for the effects of trauma on a person are legion. Rather, we will zero in on one particular kind of posttraumatic stain on the soul that interrupts union with God, namely, the experience survivors can have of blaming God for their suffering.

In what follows we wish to offer a model of atonement to explain how it might be that God, without being morally culpable, nevertheless makes reparation for persons who feel alienated from God as a result of suffering trauma. To do this, we shall not start from scratch but shall simply supplement Stump's already rich model of atonement in terms of mutual indwelling. We do not think either Stump or Rea have said anything wrong but that they opened an important lacuna that can actually be answered with the resources and internal coherence of Stump's own model. However, as we shall show, extending Stump's account to include PTSS requires some insight from psychological science on the role of empathy for human flourishing. To do this, we shall draw from attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology for an account of empathy applicable to atonement that has a broader psychological frame of reference than the specific mechanism of mirror neurons—a significant shift that may supplement Stump's account given the waning enthusiasm around the kind of mirror neuron hypothesis she deploys. But first we must discuss Stump's account in some greater depth to set up and understand the problem of PTSS for atonement.

2. The Problem of Posttraumatic Stains on the Soul for Atonement

Eleonore Stump's work on atonement is a remarkable achievement and has justly attracted wide attention. Among its many merits is a discussion of how Christ's atoning work has application not only to the distance between God and human persons caused by sinfulness and its attendant guilt and shame, but also to the morally lamentable leftovers in human psyches even after repentance and forgiveness have occurred. Drawing from Thomas Aquinas, Stump calls these psychic leftovers from sin a "stain on the soul" and she shows how atonement is aimed at removing such stains in addition to the more primary problems of shame and guilt (2018, chap. 1).

In order to show how Stump's model of atonement offers a solution to stains on the soul we must first sketch a basic contour of how her model offers a solution to the problems of guilt and shame. This requires a brief and selective paraphrase of the most pertinent themes of her account as it relates to the present article. For Stump, everything starts and ends with the love of God. "God's love is maximally

expressive of God's nature and central to the atonement . . . There is no human being, however steeped in evil, with whom God does not desire union, which is the true good for for that human being. In a sense, all of this book is an explanation of the love of God." (Stump 2018, 378). Following Aquinas, Stump defines love as a desire for the good of the beloved and union with the beloved (2018, 40). Since God is love, God always desires the good of his creatures and union with his creatures. And since union with God is also the highest good for every human, God's love is really all about the union with God that God always desires for his creatures (2018, 41). Therefore, any obstacle to union with God caused by sin must be located in human beings rather than in God, and this is the basis for Stump's rejection of the so-called "Anselmian" interpretation of atonement (2018, chap. 3).

According to Stump's construct, guilt and shame are both obstacles located in human beings to being united in love with God. Guilt involves being found unworthy of what one would consider good for oneself while shame involves being found undesirable for union with others (2018, 45). Therefore, if atonement is to bring about union in love between human persons and God, atonement must provide a solution to the problems of guilt and shame in such a way that a maximally great kind of union is achieved. But the greatest kind of union in love "is reciprocal, and requires mutual closeness" (2018, 17). So, atonement for Stump must bring about not merely a unilateral union between God and human persons, but a bilateral and mutual union that runs in both directions between human persons and God. This state of affairs constitutes a kind of mutual indwelling between humans and God that is the end for which atonement—or "at-one-ment"—is the means (2018, 7). At-one-ment brings about the mutual union in love between Creator and creature that is interrupted by sin and all its effects.

If this is the case, then any successful model of atonement must account for the way in which God indwells human persons and the way in which human persons indwell God given the facts of human sinfulness. Stump draws on a metaphysically thick account of empathy to explain how indwelling obtains between persons. To make a very rich and complex account far too simple, Stump essentially asserts that mutual indwelling occurs between persons when they are mutually close to one another and share a significant second-personal presence made possible through mind-reading and empathy. This constitutes a kind of "I-thou" relation characterized by rich shared attention through which "one person has within herself something of the mind of the other" (2018, 130). Since these are the conditions of union in love, these conditions must be met mutually between God and human persons. Therefore, as Stump explains,

> The nature of the union that atonement is meant to help bring about . . . consists in a mutual indwelling between God and a human person in grace, in which the Holy Spirit of Christ is within a person in grace and her psyche is within Christ. To achieve this mutual indwelling, Christ needs to open himself to receive the psyches of all human beings, as he does when he bears all human sin on the cross. But a human being also needs to open to receive the Holy Spirit, who indwells every person in grace. (2018, 342)

So then, for Stump, God indwells human persons through the indwelling of the Spirit whenever persons open up their psyches to God, and human persons indwell God through Christ's passion on the cross when he opened his psyche to all humanity even in its sinfulness.

Stump's model particularly shines in her account of how Christ opened his mind to all humanity during the cry of dereliction. Drawing from mirror neuron research, Stump suggests that although God did not forsake the Son on the cross, the Son still felt forsaken because he was opening his mind—or "mindreading"—to share in all the guilt, shame, and stains on the soul of humanity:

> At one and the same time, Christ mind-reads the mental states found in all the evil human acts human beings have ever committed. Every vile, shocking, disgusting, revulsive psychic state accompanying every evil human act will be at once, miraculously, in the human psyche of Christ . . . without yielding any evil configuration in either Christ's intellect or will. In this condition, Christ will have in his psyche a simulacrum of the stains of all the evil ever thought or done, without having any evil act of his own and without incurring any true stain on the soul. The suffering of such a psychic connection all at once with the evil mental states of every human evildoer would greatly eclipse all other human psychological suffering . . .Flooded with such horror, Christ might well lose entirely his ability to find the mind of God the Father. (Stump 2018, 164-165)

Stump is here saying that through the empathy and mindreading made possible by neural mechanisms such as mirror neurons, Christ's mind shared in all the guilt and shame of humanity without being himself morally culpable.

> On the cross, in the experience expressed in the cry of dereliction, Christ establishes at one and the same time an indwelling in God of all human beings even in their sinfulness. Then, when at any other time a human person . . . surrenders to God in faith and is open to God, the circuit for mutual indwelling between God and [human persons] is completed, because the Holy Spirit comes to indwell [that person]. (Stump 2018, 166)

Importantly for our paper, Stump suggests that this account of mutual indwelling offers a solution not only to the alienation caused by guilt and shame but also to the problem of stains on the soul. This point requires some specificity on what exactly these stains are. In sum, a stain on the soul is that which is leftover in one's psyche after all other reparations have been made for wrongdoing. For example, if a husband commits adultery against his wife and is thereafter repentant and desires reconciliation that is met with forgiveness, this does not change the memory of betrayal in the psyche of the wife and the shared history of betrayal that now characterizes the spousal relationship. There is relational debris leftover even after forgiveness. These are stains on the soul. With careful qualification, Stump shows how even these stains can be healed by union in love "because they have become interwoven into a story of love that is worth prizing" (2018, 374). The idea here is basically that reconciliation involves creating a new narrative in which the stains are neutralized by a qualified kind of "forgetting" that sees the sins in the new light of a reconciled and restored relationship. This is the kind of healing that atonement brings about between human persons and God. Although God cannot literally lose memory, he can "forget" human sins in the same way a betrayed spouse "forgets" the sins of an adulterous but repentant partner. Through this "forgetting" of sins a new narrative is formed and union in love counters the remaining stains on the soul caused by guilt. The sins are remembered, but they are remembered through the kind of "forgetting" made possible by union in love that sets these memories in a redemptive context and narrative.

While Stump's account of atonement for stains on the soul is convincing and rich, Michael Rea has pointed out that it does not cover all kinds of stains on the soul and therefore further development is required to supplement Stump's account. The example Rea provides to expose the lacuna in Stump's account is the case of what remains after traumatic events. Rea illustrates this with the story of Sir Lancelot in T. H. White's *The Ill-Made Knight*, where Lancelot is raped by a female imposter and this violation causes subsequent guilt and shame on Lancelot's part. Rea shows from this story that "such stains are not caused by our sins alone" and that "things that happen to us can stain our souls no less than things we do" (2019, 125). Rea's basic point is that while the kind of "forgetting" that Stump suggests may help for stains relating to guilt, not only does this not help with stains relating to shame but may even be a morally reprehensible suggestion altogether. "Why think that a victim of horrendous abuse . . . will suddenly 'forget' . . . why think that a divine 'let's forget about this' response is an *appropriate* (or even morally *acceptable*) way of dealing with the stains left by victimization?" (Rea 2019, 125).

In her response to Rea, Stump admits that "the remedies for the stains on the soul I explored cannot cure problems that have nothing to do with guilt" since "there can be an undesirable residue left on a person's psyche by being the victim of someone else's wrongdoing" (2019, 167). However, Stump does point out that her work "discussed defects such as these . . . under the heading of shame" and that she has offered an account for how atonement includes setting this shame right through its opposite which is honor. Stump explains that shame "is a matter of diminished relative standing . . .on some scale of values" and that this relative standing is outstripped by the greater honor of being desirable for union with God as manifest in Christ's empathic mindreading on the cross. "There is real honor in being so greatly desired by God that God would become incarnate to endure passion and death in order to bring human persons to himself . . . What greater honor could there be than being desirable in the eyes of God?" (Stump 2019, 168).

Rea is largely sympathetic toward Stump's rich account of Christ's empathy with all human persons on the cross and how "it is easy to imagine that knowing we've been thus empathetically engaged would matter to those who have trauma-inflicted stains upon their soul" (2019, 125). But Rea does not think Christ's empathy with the traumatized can inevitably matter for two reasons. "First, there is no clear connection between Christ's empathetic engagement with our experiential history and our no longer being pained . . . by it" (2019, 125). That is, there is no obvious causal mechanism that can explain why Christ's empathy toward traumatized persons might in reality for these persons alleviate their posttraumatic stress, or in the idiom of Aquinas, the stains on the soul caused by trauma.

Secondly, "victims of serious evil do not always blame only their human perpetrators. Some blame God simply for standing by and watching" (2019, 125). Rea provides the example of religious trauma to illustrate such cases. Drawing from the important work of Michelle Panchuk on religious trauma, Rea demonstrates that after trauma survivors can have what he calls "blaming God" beliefs. To see this, consider the following story of religious trauma from Panchuk:

> A young child is repeatedly and brutally beaten by her Christian parents. She is told that since God commanded the Israelites to stone their rebellious children, anything they do to her short of that is divinely approved and morally deserved. And she believes them. One night, they lock her out of the house as punishment for some misdeed. Sitting alone, bruised and bleeding, gazing at the stars, the girl has an overwhelming sense of the presence of God—a presence utterly terrifying because she perceives it to be of a being who delights in her suffering. (Panchuk 2018, 514)

Surviving religious trauma such as this can leave a stain on the soul in which survivors view God as a kind of accessory after the fact who was collusive, an accomplice, or even a co-perpetrator. Importantly, the question of any real moral culpability on God's part is beside the point, since for survivors these "blaming God" beliefs and feelings are real in their interruption of the divine-human relationship. Mutual indwelling has been interrupted.[1] Whether these beliefs are true or false "they are there nonetheless and contribute to people's alienation from God" (2019, 127). Rea further states that "pointing to Christ's empathetic engagement with their trauma will (insofar as they partly blame Christ as one of the causes) be of no psychological help whatsoever" (2019, 127).

In her response to Rea, Stump concedes that stains on the soul relating to trauma and shame need some explicit treatment in connection with atonement. Without being morally culpable, a good God would want to do something to alleviate this posttraumatic alienation to bring the kind of union made possible through atonement. This, then, is the question for our article. How might it be that God, without being morally culpable, nevertheless makes reparation through atonement for persons who justifiably blame God for their suffering?

There are two caveats to note about this question. First, this question is a lacuna for Stump's account because it goes beyond guilt, shame, and stains on the soul relating to guilt. Instead, it addresses stains on the soul relating to shame and more specifically to trauma. We will call these posttraumatic stains on the soul (PTSS). While there are likely many kinds of PTSS, the most compelling kind identified by Rea is the experience of blaming God for one's suffering and therefore feeling angry at God and alienated from God. This is the particular kind of PTSS with which we are concerned. Importantly, this kind of PTSS has application not only to the religious trauma described by Rea and Panchuk, but also to interpersonal trauma more generally.[2] One need not have survived religious trauma in particular to sustain a PTSS that introduces alienation into one's relationship with God. All that is required, as we shall see below, is the experience of being traumatized by overwhelming violence.

---

[1] Julie Exline's clinical research explores how unforgiveness toward God serves as a potent predictor of negative mood (Exline, Yoli, & Lobel, 1999) and also how individuals who possess the most resilient relationship with God believe, first, that it is wrong to rebel or reject God and, second, it is morally permissible to assert themselves to God, raising complaints, questions, and doubts (Exline, Kaplan, & Grubbs, 2012).

[2] As Stump point out, these treatments also have application to shame not caused by interpersonal malevolence but to such trauma as is caused by natural disaster since these are a result in Christian theology of the disordering in nature caused by human sin (Stump 2019, 346).

A second caveat is this. If a solution to the problem of PTSS is to be successful, it must be able to withstand Rea's two points above. First, if the solution calls on Christ's empathic engagement with humanity on the cross, the solution must provide a clear and plausible causal mechanism between Christ's empathic engagement and the lived experience of survivors for a restored connection with God. Second, the solution must be inclusive of the "blaming God" beliefs described by Rea. With this in mind, we turn now to attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology to advance a science-engaged approach that can provide a solution to the problem of PTSS according to these criteria.

3. Empathy and Attachment in Interpersonal Neurobiology

Our understanding of trauma has been significantly enriched by empirical developments in psychological science over the last century that have interrogated the neurological bases for interpersonal flourishing in such a way that these studies confirm the intuitions of early attachment theorists. Whereas early psychoanalysis and attachment theory have posited the importance of interpersonal relations for human flourishing, it is only in recent decades that this insight has been given empirical confirmation in neuroscientific research. A very helpful access into this body of literature can be seen by surveying a recent development in psychological science called Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB). In what follows, we shall sketch an introduction to IPNB and some basic assumptions from attachment theory in order to show the foundational role that empathy plays in generating renewed relationship between persons who feel alienated from each other. Throughout, we shall show how IPNB demonstrates that this role of empathy is empirically verifiable through recent studies in the neurobiology of attachment and that these studies provide a science-engaged basis that can be applied to the divine-human relationship for proposing a model of atonement for PTSS.

IPNB is an interdisciplinary scientific field pursuing a wholistic framework for understanding human functioning and flourishing. It emerged from a gathering of 40 scientists in the early 1990s, during the Decade of the Brain, grappling to elucidate the connection between the mind and the brain. Scholars from the fields of anthropology, molecular biology, cognitive science, education, genetics, linguistics, neuroscience, neurosurgery, physics, psychology, psychiatry, mathematics, computer science, and sociology contributed to the birth and evolution of this field, which has promulgated consilience as a core value, thereby maintaining an otherwise "discipline neutral" stance (Siegel 2012, 24). By engaging such interdisciplinary collaboration, IPNB allowed for the insights of clinical psychology

to be confirmed and strengthened by empirical studies in psychological science and neuroscientific research. This has allowed for interdisciplinary agreement on the role of the mind and brain for interpersonal flourishing, which is made possible through neurologically demonstrable dynamics of secure attachment.

The original IPNB consortium identifies the human mind as "an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information" (Siegel 2012, 22). On this definition, the mind is an integral part of a triangle of wellbeing consisting of the mind, brain, and social relationships. While the human mind is inextricably *embodied* in a physiological context of the nervous system, it is also *embedded* in an external interpersonal context of relationships. Thus, the mind is reciprocally related to both social relationships and biological bodily structures and processes, emerging from them while simultaneously shaping them. The mind encompasses what we often think of as a person's psychic qualities: thinking, feeling, and volition. Importantly, our minds include aspects of self-awareness and self-determination, which also have capacity for growth.

According to IPNB, the mind possesses a capability for awareness and attunement. Awareness involves conscious mental experience related to a sense of knowing. Attunement is the mind's ability to regulate the flow of mental information through focused and sustained awareness that is open and receptive. Attunement is a key insight from attachment theory that IPNB has helped confirm through empirical studies. According to attachment theory, attunement is central for fostering "secure attachment" between two people. Relational attunement occurs when the objects of focused attention consist of the internal emotional and body states of ourselves and others during interpersonal engagement. Being attuned to another essentially involves sharing in the "vitality affect" of another person (Stern 1985, 157) and has been postulated in neuroscience to result from right-brain to right-brain mirroring of brain states between the two people (Schore, 1994; Siegal 1999). Put another way, attunement affords a sense of being seen and openly received—it conveys a sense of mattering to another—and this sense of mattering to another is often correlated with the phenomenon of having brain states that are mirrored between the two persons attuning to each another. This vision of human flourishing from IPNB posits that attunement is not simply a mental phenomenon because it also has a basis in the way that brain states change when this subjective experience occurs.

Attunement of a caregiver to a developing child is necessary, according to attachment theory, for optimal growth and development. Without a physically proximate caregiver, an infant is defenseless against the dangers of the environment and helpless to provide for its own needs for shelter, sustenance, safety, and social

stimulation (Bowlby, 1983). Inadequate social stimulation results in failure to thrive, not just psychologically, but also physically and medically. This failure to thrive does not eclipse the human drive for attachment. The drive for interpersonal attachment itself, regardless of the quality of those bonds as either loving or abusive, is the primary animating drive of human functioning, stronger than pleasure-seeking and pain-avoidant drives (Wallin 2007). This is because the condition of psychic proximity must be met for wholistic development leading to secure attachment. When one is attuned to another this provides the basis for a healthy interpersonal connection and subsequent neurological flourishing that is a reliable or "secure" form of attachment.

On the other hand, a perceived misattunement from the caregiver can lead to various forms of "insecure attachment" with all manner of corresponding physiological dysregulation. Attachment that is insecure stemming from a lack of attunement involves some level of what is called "rupture." Unrepaired ruptures of trust are, to varying degrees, relational traumas that create an ongoing state of hypervigilance and sensitivity to threat (Wallin 2007). Trauma, in all its various forms, entails an experience of fear, helplessness, and desertion. Post-traumatic stress reflects the continuation of fear and helplessness, even when actual danger has passed, through intrusive memories of the traumatic events, sympathetic nervous system arousal, avoidance of stress-activating stimuli, and negative emotions, such as numbness, anger, depression, helplessness, guilt, and shame (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

As traumatic stress persists without sufficient resolution, the resulting "deficits in psychological and interpersonal functioning then create additional stress, which further compromises neurobiological structures . . . [the trauma] becomes a 'state of mind, brain, and body' around which all subsequent experience organizes" (Cozolino [2002] 2017, 259). Trauma has the potential to fracture mind, brain, and relationships, producing fragility and rigidity, all of which is the very antithesis of integrative health characterized by flexibility, adaptability, cohesiveness, optimal energy, and stability (Siegel 2012). Post-traumatic stress impairs the ability to perceive and receive the attunement of another. Interpersonal trauma ruptures attunement.

Understanding attachment wounds and interpersonal trauma in this manner creates a consonant and illuminating framework for Aquinas' notion of stains of the soul. Importantly, PTSS are also stains on the *body* since in trauma "the body keeps the score" (van der Kolk 2014). To the extent that PTSS is an embodied phenomenon with measurable neurological substrates (Tomko 2012), accounting for the resolution of trauma in interpersonal relationships will involve some minimal

explanation of corresponding physiological dynamics involved in this process. When transposed to the divine-human relationship, this means that a model of atonement for PTSS will require some science-engaged explanations and this will involve referencing empirical studies in psychological science.

The neuroscientific studies of trauma are importance for enriching an account of PTSS for our purpose here. Empirical studies in trauma have shown that even with effective treatment and recovery to achieve substantive resolution of post traumatic wounds, the residue of traumatic memory—both implicit and explicit—and emotional vulnerability to post-traumatic stress persist. When post traumatic growth occurs, the traumatic history no longer exists as the central organizing principle in an individual's mind, brain, and relationships. Nevertheless, the traumatic experience persists as an important aspect of the survivor's identity and personal narrative (Herman 1992). Neurological effects and relational sensitivities persist, although not nearly as severe when post-traumatic stress is florid and when the trauma remains unresolved. These unerasable dynamics might well be thought of as posttraumatic stains on the soul for the survivors of trauma, and interpersonal trauma particularly, even when significant healing and redemption are achieved. Much like a physical wound which may leave a scar when healed, a psychological wound may leave behind scarring from the traumatic event even after the memory is resolved. The difference is that while physical wounds have physical causes, psychological traumas are the result of how events are perceived—often interpersonal events when attunement is interrupted because the other is perceived as malicious or threatening rather than caring and available for connection.

Note that a real loss, abandonment, or act of harm is not necessary to rupture attunement. Rather, a *perceived* loss, abandonment, or act of harm is sufficient in the mind of a single party within the relationship—especially the more vulnerable party when a power differential is perceived—to suffer rupture, potentially resulting in anger, guilt, and shame. The loss of relational integration, that is of union, leads to fragmentation and disequilibrium of mind, brain, and relationships (Siegel 2001). Hence the notion of transference in psychological practice, where unresolved interpersonal traumas result in a patient's transferring assumptions of malintent upon the psychotherapist (McWilliams 2004). Given the patient's traumatic past, this transference is understandable. The implicit expectation is that the therapist will respond to the patient as she has been treated by significant figures in her past or in ways consonant with how the patient treats her own self with internalized messages of guilt and shame. This clinical example illustrates in human-to-human relationships what Stump has pointed out as potentially true of one's relationship with God. Just as a non-culpable therapist can justifiably appear threatening to a

traumatized patient, "people can be right to be angry at God or right to be alienated from God even if God in fact is not guilty of any injustice against them" (Stump 2019, 169).

All of this raises the question: how might attachment ruptures and interpersonal traumas be resolved? Is there a path toward redemption and recovery? To answer this question from the framework of IPNB, we return to the phenomenon of empathy as foundational to the original and restored state of mutual interpersonal attunement and union.

Empathy is the prerequisite of open, compassionate attunement to others, which leads to what IPNB calls "mindsight" (Siegel 1999, 2001). Empathy is not the relinquishing of one's own perceptions, feelings, values, and thoughts for those of another. That would be a state, contradistinctively, of fusion, or enmeshment, involving a loss of differentiation, reflecting an imbalance in the equilibrium of differentiation and linkage. Rather, empathy is the adding of the perceptions, feelings, values, and thoughts to one's own subjective reality, seeing in one's own mind a situation as if one were the other, but not losing the "as if" condition (Cain 2010). When one has this kind of measured empathic attunement in order to share in the affective state of another without losing oneself, one is experiencing what IPNB calls "mindsight" toward another. Technically speaking, mindsight is the ability to intentionally focus attention to create an internal model of one's own mind as well as the mind of another. It is a process of internalizing another's affective state that achieves a mirroring of the other's neurological activity. It is holding a conceptualization of another's mind within our own, which can be conceived as a kind of indwelling.

When two or more persons reciprocally extend mindsight toward each other with openness and compassion, intersubjectivity is the result. Intersubjectivity powerfully bonds differentiated persons together without any loss of the distinct awareness and volitions of each person while relating to the other. The intersubjective activity of mutual and relatively accurate mindsight fosters a sense of "seeing" and "being seen" by another, creating a mental experience of distinction, union, and transcendence (Mitchel 2000). Beyond a mental experience of the mind, intersubjectivity provides generative and integrative biological processes in the brain and throughout the body. They simultaneously infuse the relational ecosystem with vitality and optimal energy through synergy. Intersubjectivity of this sort—similar to what Michael Tomasello calls "joint attention" and (when developed into common goals) "joint intention" (Tomasello et al, 2005)—entails a sharing of emotions, experience, and activities that promotes human flourishing. Hence, the voluminous evidence in the scientific literature that strong social support is

powerfully and positively correlated to psychological well-being and physical health. Apart from a mutual open relational attunement, the benefits of intersubjectivity with its generative and enlivening properties remain unrealized.

In IPNB, the union achieved through intersubjectivity is the antidote to the attachment ruptures involved in posttraumatic stress. This is because relational attunement facilitates renewed social connection at psychological, neurological, and interpersonal levels (Siegel 2013, Wallin 2007) to dissolve the power of guilt and shame. For instance, studies in the neurobiology of conflict resolution have postulated that an increase in oxytocin is neurologically correlated to the phenomenon of empathic states for repairing ruptured relationships (Influs et al. 2019). Such empathic states of attunement have been simulated through computational psychiatric studies to involve higher activation of the medial prefrontal cortex than in mere cases of self-distress (Cittern and Edalat 2017). What studies like this show is that neuroscientific research continues to confirm intuitions from attachment theory that empathic attunement plays a key role in the neurological conditions for renewed social relationship between persons alienated from one another through significant interpersonal rupture such as traumatic harm (Lahousen, Unterrainer, and Kapfhammer 2019, Staemler 2012).

It is helpful here to distinguish between two processes which we can identify as resolution and repair. Resolution is similar but distinct from repair. In the case of resolution, what is involved is an interpersonal healing by the empathic witnessing of a caring other, through empathic mindsight that counteracts the guilt and shame of the traumatic event. This caring witness can arrive completely subsequent to the original interpersonal trauma. In the case of repair, however, the person guilty of the rupture or harm—or at least perceived to be culpable of harm—becomes the primary empathic witness to the survivor's suffering, resulting in reconciliation. So, unlike resolution, repair involves the empathic mindsight of the perceived perpetrator. This exchange is even more vulnerable for the survivor, as the alleged perpetrator is in a powerful position to further dismiss, reject, or perpetrate against the victim. The process of establishing empathic attunement and effectively communicating that attunement is challenging. Equally difficult is the survivor's ability to perceive and then trust, through a long incremental journey, the genuine empathy of the perpetrator. The survivor has the power to forgive the perpetrator, regardless of the perpetrator's contrition, so as to achieve freedom from resentment and intrusive re-experiencing of the abuse (Worthington 2001).

However, reconciliation requires the hard work of rebuilding trust over time to conjointly acquire reconciliation, or repair of the rupture, which extends beyond the hard work of forgiveness. The survivor experiences healing and transformation

through the exercise of courage to be vulnerable again when the alleged perpetrator receives the pain of the survivor with empathy. Although stains on the soul are not removed, bonds of attachment are greater following repair than even prior to rupture (Safran & Kraus 2014), providing its own valuable reward. Establishing and maintaining mutual relational attunement requires both trustworthiness and the extension of trust, or faith, to reap the enlivening benefits of interpersonal integration or what we might also call union. All of this can eventually result in post traumatic growth, which can be theologically interpreted as a kind of soul-building process that protests against the attachment rupture or traumatic wound by finding healing through them. In this case, the PTSS is transformed to a scar of love, a trophy of union, especially in the face of evil.

The takeaway from all this is that IPNB provides us with an empirical framework and neurological substrates that correspond to both the ruptures and repairs involved in interpersonal attachment bonds. In this framework, empathic attunement and mindsight are the antidote to interpersonal alienation resulting from perceived maltreatment regardless of the objective facts of moral culpability. It is important to note that the precise mechanisms underlying the neural substrates involved in the reparative process of mindsight remain the focus of ongoing empirical inquiries. The term "mindsight" is itself heuristic and reflects an attempt to aggregate neuroscientific findings as it correlates to observable subjective phenomena for the purposes of improving understanding and health of human brains, minds, and relationships (Siegel 2012). Undoubtedly, many neural mechanisms are necessary to develop cohesive, enduring, and modifiable mindsight maps, or internal representations, of oneself and of others. The capacity to develop and utilize mindsight maps requires the coordination of sensory process, affective awareness, explicit memory, insight, empathy, and abstract reasoning, just to name a few essential cognitive processes, each associated with various distinct regions of the brain. Mirror neurons might play an essential role in mindsight (Siegel 2012). Nonetheless, the mindsight construct is not dependent on the substantiation for the mechanism of mirror neurons, which is pending confident substantiation in scientific discourse.

In fact, mindsight, as a basis of intersubjectivity offers a more comprehensive basis for understanding of interpersonal attunement and union at neurological, psychic, and social levels. For these reasons, we opt for the term "mindsight" from IPNB as a more empirically inclusive and less mechanistically loaded term to indicate the kind of "mindreading" described by Stump when she draws from developing research on autism to explain the kind of intersubjectivity made possible by mirror neurons. As Joanna Leidenhag has recently pointed out, Stump's reliance

on the mirror neuron hypothesis might be subject to the critiques this hypothesis is undergoing as autism research continues to develop on these topics (Leidenhag 2021). Nevertheless, by supplementing Stump's more narrow focus on mirror neurons with the broader consensus of IPNB, Stump's larger point seems to still stand on good scientific grounds, namely, that human interpersonal flourishing involves the healthy functioning of neurologically measurable capacities in which we share in the affective states of other persons. Empathy and mindsight are helpful terms to indicate this insight.[3]

We have offered a survey here of constructs for human flourishing from attachment theory and IPNB to show the core dynamics involved in the ruptures and repairs of human relationships. We have seen how empathy is a neurologically measurable interaction between human persons that is at the heart of what attachment theorists call "attunement," which is also called "mindsight" in neurobiology literature. We have seen from this survey that empathic mindsight toward the suffering of another opens up the possibility for persons to repair relational ruptures and that this repairing process through empathy can take place regardless of any objective moral culpability. One's anger and alienation toward an innocent other can be resolved when the innocent other empathizes with the angry person.

To make all of this concrete, consider our example discussed above. When a wife commits adultery against her husband this leaves a stain on the soul of the husband. Suppose the husband divorces the wife and remarries later in life. He may likely have great fear, anger, or alienation toward his new spouse because he fears the past will be repeated. He may be triggered by the most innocent acts of kindness of the new spouse toward other men in their shared life. To the extent this anger or alienation toward his new wife stems from the husband's experience of his former marriage as a traumatic event, this misplaced anger is exactly the kind of PTSS our paper is exploring. The husband is angry with good reason given his past. And even though his new spouse is not morally culpable, the husband's "blaming beliefs" are real and contribute to an alienation between him and his new spouse that interrupts mutual union in love. Given this problem, what we have found from attachment theory and IPNB is that one of the best ways to repair this relational rupture is for the new spouse to simply empathize with the wounded husband. In our example, this will involve the new spouse exercising what we have described as "mindsight"

---

[3] Even with this broader definition, mindsight may still be a capacity that does not include the kind of social relating experienced by autistic persons (Siegel 2010) in which case our model for PTSS would need further expanding to account for the kind of "blaming God beliefs" experienced by autistic persons.

toward the fearful husband thereby creating the possibility for rupture repair to achieve intersubjective union that is generative for the spousal attachment bond. Importantly, this empathy is not counterproductive or stagnant but can lead to a relationally generative interaction that can alleviate the husband's misplaced anger and alienation in ways that correspond to important neurological substrates that undergird our experience of human flourishing. On this example, empathy is the necessary condition for exercising the kind of mindsight leading to both repair of an alienated relationship as well as a generative enriching of that relationship for posttraumatic growth.

4. The Cry of Dereliction and Posttraumatic Indwelling

In the first part of this paper, we outlined the problem of PTSS for recent models of atonement in analytic theology. We then explored attachment theory and IPNB and found that empathic attunement and mindsight have regenerative properties for repairing rupture in a way that restores secure attachment between alienated persons. We now wish to make a constructive suggestion from these findings in order to supplement Stump's account. This involves proposing a model of atonement to suggest that Christ's cry of dereliction might be not only his mindsight toward sinners but also toward sinned against persons and their occurrent PTSS.

Thinking about Christ's mindsight toward the traumatized in this way goes beyond Stump's account of shame in an important way. While shame is certainly a matter of relative standing among a perceived social hierarchy as Stump suggests, it involves more than this when stains are considered. Shame can not simply be an issue of degree of honor only because, like guilt, shame leaves stains on the souls of the traumatized and these must be addressed in some way by God. So, while Christ's morally pure participation through empathic mindsight with the evil of humanity does bestow honor to counter humanity's shame, this honor does not address the morally lamentable leftovers of trauma. As it currently stands, Stump's model provides a clear solution to shame, but this solution is not currently extended to include PTSS.

Stump agrees with this point and admits with Rea that whatever solution is provided for what we are calling PTSS, Christ's empathy with human suffering will be insufficient in itself to constitute this solution. Stump summarizes the issue this way:

> I also agree with Rea that a person who is angry at God or is alienated from God is not helped by having it explained to her that in the incarnate Christ God has suffered

> as she has. If . . . all there is in Christ's incarnation and passion is an additional suffering in the world, then what Christ endures simply makes more suffering . . . cases need some explicit treatment . . . a perfectly loving God would want to do something to remedy the human sufferer's anger or alienation, even though God is not guilty of any injustice towards the sufferer. (Stump 2019, 170)

But are persons with "blaming beliefs" toward God for trauma really simply "not helped" by considering Christ's empathy toward them? Does Christ's passion simply add to the suffering of the world? What if God's doing something to remedy the human sufferer's anger or alienation has taken place precisely in Christ's passion? That is what we are suggesting here. Drawing from attachment theory and IPNB, we suggest that much like the central role of empathic attunement and mindsight for bringing repair to ruptured attachments, perhaps God received the anger of traumatized persons with empathy *as if* he were morally culpable for their suffering. On this proposal, God's willing submission to the guilty verdict thrown up by angry survivors can become the very mechanism by which these persons can come to believe that God understands and wants to understand their pain, especially because he does not avoid nor repay violence with violence. Rather, he absorbs the vitriol of false accusation with full physical and psychical presence to the very point of death. Thereafter, with the power of resurrection and grace, he reveals the true nature of himself to those who would wrongly accuse him, thereby winning trust and affection. And in this divine willingness to understand despite being unjustly blamed, God can demonstrate that he is morally pure and worthy of trust. In this context of God's free embrace of posttraumatic anger, secure attachment can be established for survivors.

To make our case, let us now return to the story of Diane from the beginning of our paper. No matter how hard she tried to live closely with God after surviving sexual abuse, Diane says "I still felt a wall of distance between us . . . I was furious with God. I was also terrified of him." (Schmutzer 2011, 358). This shows how traumatic events can instigate posttraumatic stress in survivors in such a way as to block or significantly inhibit rich shared attention with God, and we have called a kind of posttraumatic stain on the soul by drawing from Stump and Rea. As Rea indicates, and Diane's story shows, these posttraumatic stains can include an understandable sense of feeling angry at God or alienated from God for one's suffering even though God is not morally culpable. This being the case, Diane indicates nevertheless that she was eventually able to experience a renewed sense of God's love for her. Diane says that "God continues to redeem my past" and that "it

is the goodness of God that heals me"—a process which she describes as being "bound by the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Schmutzer 2011, 359–360).

How might such a connection with God be made possible by the person and work of Christ given the inhibiting forces caused by posttraumatic stains on the soul? We are proposing here the beginnings of one science-engaged model of atonement that might provide an answer. Through his atoning work on the cross Christ may have opened his mind to all the stains on the soul of fallen human beings in such a way as to include a particular variant of posttraumatic stains on the soul, namely, of blaming God for one's suffering even though God is not morally culpable. Christ may have had a simulacrum of such an experience in his own mind during the cry of dereliction by having an advanced and accurate empathic attunement through which traumatized persons indwelled his mind. Traumatized persons were in Christ on the cross because Christ received them into himself through an intentional psychic connection and attunement toward these persons, a process which interpersonal neurobiology calls "mindsight." And since Christ was God, these persons were also in God, and this means that for any such person who subsequently receives God's offer to dwell in them, the circuit of mutual indwelling will be complete and union in love can be accomplished. In this way, God supplies his part for mutual indwelling that can counter the alienation caused by trauma because he is open toward the traumatized.[4]

However, as Stump indicates, more is required if union in love is to be established. Union in love requires mutual indwelling. God was in Christ opening himself up to the traumatized so that they may dwell in God. But how can traumatized persons open themselves up so that God may dwell in them? While this seems the harder practical question to answer, we have suggested that Christ's cry of dereliction supplies the very interpersonal grounds for this opening process to begin. Christ's mindsight was empathic, and since empathic mindsight has empirically verifiable regenerative properties for traumatized persons who feel alienated from others regardless of moral culpability, Christ's empathic mindsight toward persons with posttraumatic stains on the soul may have similarly regenerative properties for persons to experience renewed trust in the goodness of God. That is because, as interpersonal neurobiology indicates, empathy toward the

---

[4] We are not buying wholesale into all of Stump's account of atonement but instead are merely using Stump's own atonement constructs to show how her account might be supplemented on the terms she has developed. Some of Stump's use of philosophical constructs on themes like second-personal presence and joint attention is contested. For alternate ways of considering second personal presence and joint attention in ways applicable to incarnation and the divine-human relationship see Cockayne 2020, ch. 2; Siposova and Carpenter 2019; Benton 2018; Green 2017.

suffering of another does not always have to merely add to the suffering of the world but can actually generate renewed relational bonds between persons feeling alienation as a result of trauma. So, Christ's suffering with the traumatized on the cross can be more than a mere sentiment since Christ was not just another suffering human but was God in the flesh. If this God can be conceived in Christ's suffering as opening himself with empathic mindsight to the posttraumatic stain on the soul of blaming God for one's suffering, then this provides just the precondition necessary for those who blame God for their suffering to begin to deem him trustworthy again. Paradoxically, the human soul vexed with a sense that she is abandoned by God is joined in that very experience of dereliction as Christ undertakes abandonment in solidarity with the victims of trauma both through empathic mindsight and by suffering trauma. When we blame God for the sin of others, and when God opens himself up to the pain of this experience in Christ, God makes it possible for us to trust him again by letting us know that he wants to understand our pain even given of our blaming him for this pain. Demonstrating that he is not indifferent lays the ground for us to trust him again. He has done this in the atoning work of Christ on the cross.

Importantly, our suggestion here meets the two criteria raised by Rea above. Drawing from attachment theory and IPNB, our account supplies a clear and plausible causal mechanism for explaining how a consideration of Christ's empathic engagement with our experiential history may actually help in our no longer being pained by it. Because one person is clearly helped by having another who is perceived as morally culpable for their suffering actually empathize with that suffering, Christ's empathic engagement with the PTSS of blaming God can clearly help for those who blame God for their suffering, given that Christ is at the same time the God who is being blamed. Since empathic attunement toward another's trauma has empirically verifiable properties that are relationally generative for restoring union between alienated persons (whether real or perceived), our model suggests that Christ's cry as a share in posttraumatic stains on the soul on behalf of the God being blamed by survivors can restore interpersonal connection between these survivors and God, inasmuch as interpersonal neurobiology and attachment theory show that a perceived wrongdoer's empathy with the wounded provides a concrete avenue for restored trust and psychological connection. This is a kind of science-engaged supplement to fortify Stump's more theoretical Thomistic proposal on how Christ's passion helps a subsequent life in grace and surrender to God.[5] Our

---

[5] Our science-engaged approach for offering a causal mechanism may fortify Stump's account against the critique that her account seems "Abelardian" or "merely exemplarist" on the relation between Christ's passion and a person's subsequent surrender to God (e.g., Johnson 2019, 316).

sketch here might provide one science-engaged mechanism to explain how it is possible for Christ's reconciling work to have concrete bearing on the experience of redemption for persons in grace today who have known the trauma of living in a world that wanders east of Eden.[6] So, Christ's mental openness toward traumatized persons is not only the precondition for mutual posttraumatic indwelling which subsequently requires an independent openness of the traumatized person toward God. Rather, Christ's empathic engagement is simultaneously God's part for indwelling while also being itself a potential causal mechanism that can facilitate the human part of indwelling also.[7] Therefore, Christ's empathic engagement provides a total basis for mutual indwelling between God and posttraumatic human persons. Christ's empathy with trauma can facilitate mutual posttraumatic indwelling. It is therefore not obvious as Rea thinks that "pointing to Christ's empathetic engagement with their trauma will (insofar as they partly blame Christ as one of the causes) be of no psychological help whatsoever" (2019, 127). Additionally, because our account engages concretely with the problem of "blaming God" beliefs, our model offers a potential solution to exactly this particular kind of PTSS. Therefore, our suggestion here offers a plausible explanation for how Christ's empathy with PTSS may alleviate the anger and alienation that traumatized persona can have toward God.

But can this really help for survivors of trauma in the real world? We think so and two examples may help illustrate. A celebrated treatment of trauma and theology comes from a little book by Serene Jones called *Trauma and Grace*. In it, Jones tells the story of of her work leading a women's self-defense class for female survivors of domestic violence. One time these survivors attended a Maundy Thursday recalling the last supper. Jones says that "they lost themselves in the growing darkness of the liturgy, they all wept, silently profusely" because of "a strong positive connection they felt with Jesus in the midst of his passion." Jones further says that "far from cultivating a victimlike reaction, their identification with him appeared to lift them up." One survivor's comments in particular captures this for Jones: "'I get it,' she had said. 'He gets me. He knows'" (Jones 2009, 75–77). This story shows how reflecting on Christ's empathic engagement with a person's history of trauma can actually help facilitate renewed connection with God.

---

[6] See this question (how Christ's story can change other human stories) in Crisp 2020, 166; Rea 2019, 133.

[7] For a fuller account we would need to elaborate beyond the scope of this paper on the precise role of the Holy Spirit in facilitating this human part of openness to God's indwelling a traumatized person with PTSS. We hope to expand on the indwelling of the Spirit in future research.

A second example comes from Elie Wiesel. There is perhaps no better way of expressing the posttraumatic stain of a "blaming God" belief than Wiesel's words quoted in Judith Herman's famous work *Trauma and Recovery*.

> There are people with strong and secure belief systems who can endure the ordeals of imprisonment and emerge with their faith intact or strengthened. But these are the extraordinary few. The majority of people experience the bitterness of being forsaken by God. The Holocaust survivor Wiesel gives voice to this bitterness: "Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget those things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never". (Herman 1992, 94)

Despite these heavy statements, Wiesel writes elsewhere of the catharsis available when someone who has blamed God for their suffering can experience his empathy toward them even while he is blamed. To make this point Wiesel tells the story of a Rabbi's words to his followers while being deported to Auschwitz. "He began consoling his disciples: it is written, he said, that that when the Messiah will come God, blessed be He, will arrange a *makhol*, a dance, for the just. Makhol, said the Rabbi, may come from the verb *limkohl*—to forgive . . . there will come a time, when the Just Men, the *Tzaddikim*, will forgive God, blessed be He" (Wiesel 1991, 131). Regardless of whether God is in reality above the kind of moral culpability requiring such forgiveness, having the experience of God's empathy with one's suffering can facilitate the kind of renewed trust needed to resolve the "blaming beliefs" described by Wiesel.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, our paper has probed how empirical science may provide a solution to a question raised by analytic theology on what we have called PTSS. If PTSS bring alienation between human persons and God, and if atonement is all about union that counters alienation, then how can Christ's atonement have application to PTSS? We have suggested that perhaps God addresses these stains in a manner similar to how human persons bridge the gap of interpersonal alienation with one another through empathic attunement and mindsight. Perhaps God engaged empathic mindsight with the posttraumatically stained of all humanity through Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross. Such an attunement between the mind of Christ and the minds of the traumatized with stains seems to inherit all the strengths of Stump's account and yet

supplements her account in just the way that both she and Rea agree is needed. Our proposal here supplies an explanation of how Christ lost shared attention in his relationship with God on the cross through a relationship with fallen humanity while being free of moral culpability. Our proposal also explains how some kind of objective union with God (or, "at-one-ment") was accomplished in this cry through the indwelling of the sinned against in the mind of Christ (by empathic mindsight) and through Christ's indwelling in God. Importantly, because the empathic mindsight of Christ toward humanity was relationally generative for reestablishing trust in an alienated relationship, this interaction between Christ's mind and stained minds provides an interpersonal basis for these persons to experience renewed relationship with God according to the way this normally happens for human persons in the real world. In our eyes this constitutes the beginnings of a science-engaged model of atonement for PTSS.[8]

---

[8] It is important to underscore that our model proposes a normative-theological claim with implications for pastoral-descriptive issues. The normative-theological claim pertains to what happened on the cross as God's answer to the kind of moral obligation God has toward humanity's traumatization on Stump and Rea's accounts. The pastoral-descriptive issue pertains to the subsequent psychological dynamics: because God has done this, if humans are subsequently reflective of it, it will help them in their recovering secure attachment to God. We have not explored this pastoral-descriptive issue further in this paper, except to suggest its plausibility, though we hope to elaborate on this pastoral/clinical intervention in future research.

Bibliography

American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596.

Benjet, C., E. Bromet, E. G. Karam, R. C. Kessler, K. A. McLaughlin, A. M. Ruscio, V. Shahly, D. J. Stein, M. Petukhova, E. Hill, J. Alonso, L. Atwoli, B. Bunting, R. Bruffauerts, J. M. Caldas-de-Almeida, G. de Girolamo, S. Florescu, O. Gureje, Y. Huang, J. P. Lepine, N. Kawakami, Viviane Kovess-Masfety, M. E. Medina-Mora, F. Navrro-Mateu, M. Piazza, J. Posad-Villa, K. M. Scott, A. Shalev, T. Slade, M. ten Have, Y. Torres, M. C. Viana, Z Zarkov, K. C. Koenen. 2016. "The Epidemiology of Traumatic Event Exposure Worldwide: Results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium." *Psychological Medicine* 46, no. 2 (January): 327–343. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291715001981.

Benton, Matthew. 2018. "God and Interpersonal Knowledge." *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 3 (July): 421–447. https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.1666.

Bowlby, John. 1983. *Attachment and Loss: Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic.

Cain, David J. 2010. *Person-Centered Psychotherapies*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Cittern, David, and Abbas Edalat. 2017. "A Neural Model of Empathic States in Attachment-Based Psychotherapy." *Computational Psychiatry* 1:132–167. https://doi.org/10.1162/CPSY_a_00006.

Cockayne, Joshua. 2020. *Contemporary with Christ: Kierkegaard and Second-Personal Spirituality*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Cozolino, Louis J. (2002) 2017. *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy: Healing the Social Brain*. New York, NY: Norton.

Crisp, Oliver D. 2020. *Approaching the Atonement: The Reconciling Work of Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Exline, Julie J., Kalman Kaplan, K. and Joshua Grubbs. 2012. "Anger, Exit, and Assertion: Do People See Protest Toward God as Morally Acceptable?" *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 4, no. 4, 264–277. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027667.

Exline, Julie J., Ann Marie Yali, and Marci Lobel. 1999. "When God Disappoints: Difficulty Forgiving God and its Role in Negative Emotion." *Journal of Health Psychology* 4, no. 3: 365–379. https://doi.org/10.1177/135910539900400306.

Green, Adam. 2017. "Omnisubjectivity and Incarnation." *Topoi* 36: 693–701. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-016-9391-2.

Herman, Judith. 1992. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic.

Influs, Moran, Maayan Pratt, Shafiq Masalha, Orna Zagoory-Sharon, and Ruth Feldman. 2019. "A Social Neuroscience Approach to Conflict Resolution: Dialogue Intervention to Israeli and Palestinian Youth Impacts Oxytocin and Empathy." *Social Neuroscience* 14, no. 4: 378–389. https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2018.1479983.

Johnson, Adam J. 2019. "Stump's Modified Anselmianism: A Review Article of Eleonore Stump's 'Atonement.'" *Journal of Reformed Theology* 13: 313–327. https://doi.org/10.1163/15697312-01303011.

Jones, Serene. 2009. *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Louisville: Wesminster John Knox.

Lahousen, Theresa, Human Friedrich Unterrainer, and Hans-Peter Kapfhammer. 2019. "Psychobiology of Attachment and Trauma—Some General Remarks from a Clinical Perspective." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 10: 914. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2019.00914.

Leidenhag, Joanna. 2021. "The Challenge of Autism for Relational Approaches to Theological Anthropology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 23, no. 1 (January): 109–134. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12453.

Levers, Lisa Lopez, ed. 2012. *Trauma Counseling: Theories and Interventions*. New York, NY: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826106841.

Kilpatrick, Dean G., Heidi S. Resnick, Melissa E. Milanak, Mark W. Miller, Katherine M. Keyes, and Matthew J. Friedman. 2013. "National Estimates of Exposure to Traumatic Events and PTSD Prevalence Using DSM-IV and DSM-5 Criteria." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 26, no. 5 (October): 537–547. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21848.

McWilliams, Nancy. 2004. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Practitioner's Guide*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Mitchell, Stephen A. 2000. *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity*. New York, NY: Analytic Press.

Panchuk, Michelle. 2018. "The Shattered Spiritual Self: A Philosophical Exploration of Religious Trauma." *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 3 (July): 505–530. https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.1684.

Rea, Michael C. 2018. *The Hiddenness of God*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198826019.001.0001.

Rea, Michael. 2019. "The Ill-Made Knight and the Stain on the Soul." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 1 (Spring): 117–134. https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v11i1.2568.

Safran, Jeremy D., and Jessica Kraus. 2014. "Alliance Ruptures, Impasses, and Enactments: A Relational Perspective." *Psychotherapy* 51: 381–387.

https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036815.

Sartor, Dan, Cara Cochran, Amanda M. Blackburn, Mary K. Plisco, and Jama L. White. 2018. "The Role of Attachment in Spiritual Formation at Richmont Graduate University." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 11, no. 2: 253–270. https://doi.org/10.1177/1939790918795631.

Siposova, Barbora, and Malinda Carpenter. 2019. "A New Look at Joint Attention and Common Knowledge." *Cognition* 189: 260–274.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2019.03.019.

Schmutzer, Andrew, ed. 2011. *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Schore, Allen N. 1994. *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Siegel, Daniel J. 2012. *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind*. Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology. New York: Norton.

Siegel, Daniel J. 2010. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Bantum Books.

Siegel, Daniel J. 2006. "An Interpersonal Neurobiology Approach to Psychotherapy." *Psychiatric Annals* 36: 248-256. https://doi.org/10.3928/00485713-20060401-06.

Siegel, Daniel J. 2001. "Attachment Relationships, 'Mindsight,' and Neural Integration." *Infant Mental Health Journa*l 22: 67–94. https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-0355(200101/04)22:1%3C67::AID-IMHJ3%3E3.0.CO;2-G.

Siegel, Daniel J. 1999. *The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience*. New York: Guilford.

Staemmler, Frank M. 2012. *Empathy in Psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Springer.

Stern, Daniel N. 1985. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. New York: Basic.

Stump, Eleonore. 2019. "The Doctrine of the Atonement: Response to Michael Rea, Trent Dougherty, and Brandon Warmke." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 1 (Spring): 165–186. https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v11i1.2710.

Stump, Eleonore. 2018. *Atonement*. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198813866.001.0001.

Tomasello, Michael, Malinda Carpenter, Josep Call, Tanya Behne, and Henrike Moll. 2005. "Understanding and Sharing Intentions: The Origins of Cultural Cognition." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 28: 675–735. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X05000129.

Tomko, John R. 2012. "Neurobiological Effects of Trauma and Psychopharmacology." In *Trauma Counseling: Theories and Interventions*, edited by

Lisa Lopez Levers, 59–76. New York, NY: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826106841.0004.

Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2014. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. New York: Penguin.

Van der Kolk, Bessel, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth, eds. 2007. *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. New York: Guilford.

Wallin, David. 2007. *Attachment in Psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Wiesel, Elie. 1991. *Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends*. Translated by Marion Wiesel. New York: Summit.

Worthington, Everett L. 2001. *Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving*. New York, NY: Crown.